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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.*

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NOVEMBER 8. THE STORY OF JONAH, Jonah I., 1-17.

NOVEMBER 15. EFFECT OF JONAH'S PREACHING, Jonah III., 1-10.

At what date did Jonah live and prophesy? When was the Book of Jonah written? Is the story contained in the book history or parable? These three questions are often confounded, but they are as distinctly separate as it is possible for questions to be.

The first is readily answered from 2 Kgs. XIV., 25, where it is said of Jeroboam II.:

"It was he who restored the border of Israel, from the entering in of Hamath to the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah the God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-Hepher."

Since the victories of Jeroboam were the fulfillment of prophecies by Jonah, it follows that Jonah lived either in the times of Jeroboam or earlier. A brief sketch of the times of Jeroboam was given in the closing sentences of the article in the October number of the STUDENT. From what is there said it is evident that Jonah's prophecy of the restoration of the border of Israel must, in the nature of the case, have been also a prophecy of a contemporaneous weakening of the Assyrian empire,—perhaps of the overthrow, for the time being, of Nineveh as the capital of that empire. We have also found reason to think that such a weakening took place in those times, whether Jonah prophesied it or not.

Amos and Hosea were also prophets of the days of Jeroboam, and many scholars assign Joel, Obadiah, and the last chapters of Zechariah to the same period; and the study of these prophets, with this purpose in view, throws great light on the history of the times. But Jonah should hardly be classed as contemporary with the others. There is a marked difference between their prophesying and what we know of his. His must be dated as early as the earlier part of Jeroboam's reign; theirs, in the later years of Jeroboam. The interval was one of many years, and was marked by great political changes. Jonah may have lived to see Amos and Hosea, but he belongs to an earlier generation.

The questions of the authorship and of the historicity of the Book of Jonah are well discussed by Paul Kleinert and Dr. Charles Elliott, citing Pusey and others, in the introduction to Jonah in the American edition of Lange's commentary. It is clear that the book was written by some man who had the gift of prophecy, and that it is properly a part of the Old Testament Scriptures. But whether the writer was Jonah himself, or some other prophet, is a different question. The Books of Amos and Hosea have titles ascribing their authorship, or at least the uttering of the prophecies they contain, to those prophets; the Book of Jonah has no title. The first verse mentions a prophecy

* In the STUDENT for October, strike out "and Uzziah," last line of page 72.

of Jonah as the subject of which the book treats, but it does not claim that the book itself is a prophecy of Jonah, much less that it was written by him. Apparently, the most decisive existing indication as to the date of the book is the fact that it employs a considerable number of words which, in the meaning in which it employs them, are not found in the earlier books of the Bible, but are found in the later books, and in the post-biblical Hebrew. For example, *Mallach* (sailor) is found in the Bible only in Jonah i., 5, and three times in Ezekiel. *Mah^alak* (journey) occurs only in Jonah iii., 3, 4, and once in Nehemiah, and once in Ezekiel. *Ribbo* (ten thousand) is used often in the later books, and in Jonah iv., 11, and elsewhere only in the K^thibh of Hos. viii., 12, where it is probably a misreading.¹ In the phrase *Rabh Hachobhel* (shipmaster), Jonah i., 6, the second word occurs only here and four times in Ezekiel, while *Rabh* is seldom or never used in the earlier Hebrew to designate a person in authority, but is often so used in the Aramaic and in the later Hebrew. In all stages of the language, the verb *Manah* is used in the sense of "numbering;" in the meaning "to appoint" it is used only in Jonah i., 17; ii., 1; iv., 6, 7, 8, and in Daniel and Chronicles, and, perhaps, in Psalm lxi. *Ta'am*, in the sense of "decree," is found only in the Hebrew of Jonah iii., 7, though it is frequent in the Aramaic of the later books. Having noticed these and similar phenomena, we naturally conclude that the use of the prefix form of the relative pronoun, Jonah i., 7, 12; iv., 10, and the use of the prefix *l* with the object accusative, Jonah iv., 6, are to be explained as marks of the later Hebrew, rather than by any of the other possible explanations. These indications of late authorship would not be strong enough to overthrow positive proof that Jonah wrote the book, if such proof existed; but until such proof can be adduced, they must be counted as deciding the matter. The most probable conclusion is, therefore, that the book was written after the Chaldeans destroyed Jerusalem, by some prophet who was a classical Hebraist, who thoroughly understood the history of the times of Jonah, and who may have had in his possession written prophecies of Jonah against Nineveh. Of course, it does not affect the scriptural authority of the book, if the prophesying of Jonah is thus commemorated, like that of Elijah or of Elisha, in writings produced by another hand than his own.

We turn to the question whether the story related in the book of Jonah is historical. No one can prove that the New Testament story of the prodigal son is not an actual biography of an actual person. Most people, however, do not think of it as being a narrative of facts, but as an imaginary narrative, true to life, given for purposes of instruction. We frequently refer to the statements of this familiar story, without the least apprehension that any one will therefore infer that we regard them as statements of historical facts. Similarly, there is nothing in the references made by Jesus to Jonah, that shows whether he regarded the narrative as historical fact, or simply as a sacred parable, recorded for purposes of instruction, a story familiar to his hearers. The principal religious, moral, and patriotic lessons it teaches are precisely the same, whether the facts be real or imaginary. There are several reasons of weight in favor of its historical character. The miraculous circumstances related in it constitute no reason for doubting its historicity, in the minds of those of us who believe that revealed religion was originally authenticated by miracles. But it is important

¹ רִבּוֹתִים, Ps. lxxviii., 18, may be easily explained as an earlier word.

to emphasize the fact that the scriptural value of the book of Jonah does not depend on the question whether it is history rather than parable.

It is not of much consequence whether the fish that swallowed Jonah was or was not a whale. The Greek word *Ketos*, used in the Septuagint and the New Testament, may, like the Hebrew *Dag*, mean any large fish. But, on the other hand, true whales have sometimes been found in those waters. It took a miracle to enable any fish to afford accommodations to Jonah, and no more than a miracle if the fish was a whale. There is something rather comical in the importance which has sometimes been attached to this question, in the attack and defense of revealed religion.

Another funny item of traditional interpretation is that which makes Jonah to have been the first foreign missionary. This would perhaps be a harmless fancy, were it not for its ignoring the important truth that the religion of Jehovah, as described in the Old Testament, was a missionary religion from the beginning. The Scriptures say that Abraham and Israel were chosen that all nations might be blessed in them, and in every stage of the history they emphasize this. To represent Jonah's preaching to Nineveh as a new departure in this direction, is to make a representation which may be hurtfully misleading.

Jonah tried to get away from his conscience by starting for Tarshish instead of starting for Nineveh; that is, by doing something else instead of doing the one thing which he knew God required. Most of us have tried the same experiment. Jonah found that Jehovah has infinite resources, both natural and supernatural,—in his case, the winds, the sea, the hearts of heathen sailors and of Jonah himself, the fall of the lot, the great fish,—to prevent our thus escaping His call to duty. Other men have had the same experience. Jonah found, further, that Jehovah has also boundless resources,—in this case, including the whole history and organization of the Assyrian empire,—for helping one who, in *His* fear, attempts a discouraging duty. It would be well for us all to learn this lesson better. Jonah was reminded that it is not worth while to discredit what God says, for fear of injuring God's reputation. The book teaches that God is merciful, and accepts the repentant. For illustrating and enforcing these and other like truths, the book of Jonah is peculiarly rich and edifying. We should not allow our attention to be diverted from these truths by any discussion whatever concerning other matters.

NOVEMBER 22. HEZEKIAH'S GOOD REIGN, 2 Kgs. xviii., 1-12.

NOVEMBER 29. HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER ANSWERED, 2 Kgs. xx., 1-17.

The biblical literature connected with this reign is not limited to the accounts contained in the historical books, but includes also many of the prophecies of Isaiah, Micah, and Nahum, some Psalms, and the last chapters of Proverbs. The known Assyrian literature for this period is even more voluminous than the biblical; and, at some points, quite as full in its details of Palestinian history. In a very large number of instances, the two literatures mention or allude to the same persons, events, or customs. At present, we can attempt nothing more than merely to state, in their probable order, a few of the more salient facts of the history.

In the STUDENT for October, we traced the synchronisms of the biblical and the Assyrian history, as far as to some unknown date in the reign of Uzziah, in the one line, and to the first year of Assur Daan III., B. C. 772, in the other line.

Assur Daan reigned 18 years, Assur Nirari II. 10 years, Tiglath-Pilezer II. 18 years, and Shalmanezzer IV. 5 years. He was succeeded by Sargon, in whose reign we are again able to fix exactly the synchronisms of the two lines of history.

Sargon captured Samaria in "the beginning of his reign," that is, in the year before the one that is commonly counted as his first year, the latter being 721 B. C. In most of the published work on the subject, it is assumed that this was the final capture of Samaria, at the close of the reign of king Hoshea; but the assumption is contrary both to the Assyrian and the biblical records. Sargon says that Samaria, in his second year, was still in existence as a political power, and was in alliance with Hamath and Damascus, and with Sebech (the So of the Bible) king of Egypt, and that he himself signally defeated the alliance. It is evident, therefore, however we may explain any of the other statements that are made, that the second year of Sargon was the fourth year of Hezekiah, the year in which So was defeated, and the siege of Samaria begun. Sargon's final complete subjugation of Samaria was later; doubtless at the date assigned to it in 2 Kgs. XVIII., 10, the sixth year of Hezekiah. His capture of Samaria in his accession year was an earlier operation, that recorded in 2 Kgs. XVII., 3.¹

Sargon was the founder of a dynasty. There may have been certain years during which the empire was in dispute between him and his predecessor, Shalmanezzer IV., so that some writers would ascribe the years to Sargon, and others to Shalmanezzer. As a matter of fact, the inscription of George Smith dates the accession of Sargon two years later than the date commonly given. The biblical accounts apparently do the same, ascribing to Shalmanezzer the events of these two years, up to the forming of the siege of Samaria (2 Kgs. XVII., 3; XVIII., 9).

Working back from these data, we find that the first year of Assur Daan was the 35th year of Uzziah king of Judah. The reigns of Uzziah and Ahaz are peculiarly rich in points of synchronism with the Assyrian records; but no Sunday School Lessons are assigned for these reigns, and even a cursory treatment of them would require more space than we should be justified in giving.

¹ The following documents of Sargon have been consulted:

1. Annals of Sargon, published by Oppert in *Dur-Sarkayan*, Paris, 1870; later by Menant, in *Annales des rois d'Assyrie*, and by Oppert in *Rec. of Past*, vol. VII. It is a quite full record of Sargon's history, year by year. Oppert says of the *Annals*: "They have been engraved in the two halls of Khorsabad, which are noted in the Plan of Botta as Nos. II. and V. . . . An immense ribbon of inscriptions, disposed in columns like the papyrus rolls. . . . In entering the hall, the reader commenced at his left hand, and followed all the sides and angles of the room, until he returned to the entrance door, where the last lines of the inscription were opposite to its beginning. I have restored the texts by the four copies of hall II., V., XIII. and XIV." Extracts are given in Smith's *Chronology*, p. 128, and p. 125, xxi., xxiii.

2. The Khorsabad Inscription. Four copies of it in halls IV., VII., VIII. and X. of the Assyrian Palace. Copied in Botta's *Monuments de Ninive*, translated in *Dur-Sarkayan*, and previously. Oppert's latest translation in *Rec. of Past*, vol. IX. Cited in Smith's *Chronology*, p. 125, xxii., and p. 126, xxiv., xxv.

3. George Smith's Cylinder. Particularly full account of the Ashdod expedition. *Assyr. Disc.*, chap. xv.; *Chronology*, pp. 129-131.

4. Cylinder. Assyrian text (restored from four copies), with transliteration, German translation, and full treatment, in *Keilschrifttexte Sargon's Königs von Assyrien*, published in 1883, by Professor D. G. Lyon, of Harvard University. Cited in Smith's *Chronology*, p. 129.

5. Bull Inscription, from Khorsabad. Treated by Lyon, as above. Oppert's translation, with history of the inscription and notes, in *Rec. of Past*, vol. XI.

6-10. Four shorter inscriptions, treated by Lyon. Three of the same, with another, in *Rec. of Past*, vol. XI.

11. Cyprus Monolith, cited in Smith's *Chronology*, p. 127.

12. Fragment K. 1349, cited in Smith's *Chronology*, p. 127.

Since Ahaz reigned 16 years, and the nine years of Hoshea began not later than the close of the 12th of Ahaz, and the 4th year of Hezekiah was the 7th of Hoshea (2 Kgs. XVI., 2; XVII., 1; XVIII., 1, 2), it follows that the first of the 29 years of Hezekiah was the same year which was also counted as the 16th of Ahaz. The year which, in 2 Chron. XXIX., is called the first year of Hezekiah, in the first month of which he opened the doors of the house of God, was his first complete year, being the second of the 29 years of his reign. In this second year of Hezekiah, Samaria was reduced to subjection by Sargon, whom the Bible counts as, at the time, the servant of Shalmanezzer, although, by Sargon's account, his own reign had then already begun. Both Israel and Judah had previously been brought under tribute by Tiglath-Pilezer, who had made large deportations from the Northern kingdom, and probably from Judah also (2 Chron. XXX., 6, 9); but as Judah had passed into subjection, through the faithlessness of Ahaz, without exhausting wars, she was still rich in resources. If the events of this portion of the history are related in the order in which they occurred, Hezekiah promptly refused the tribute which Ahaz had been accustomed to pay; and strengthened himself, in his refusal, by hostilities against the Philistine dependencies of Assyria "as far as Gaza," and by attempts to awaken the religious enthusiasm of the northern tribes, as well as of his own subjects (2 Kgs. XVIII., 7, 8; 2 Chron. XXX., 6, 10, etc.). The Assyrian capture of Samaria was later in the year.

The third year of Hezekiah was the first of Sargon, who says, in his annals, that he was this year employed in campaigns against Elam, and against Merodach-Baladan in Babylon. This probably accounts for the fact that he did not at once push his conquests in Palestine, and make an attempt to reduce Hezekiah.

The fourth year of Hezekiah was the seventh of Hoshea and the second of Sargon. Hamath, Damascus, and Samaria had taken advantage of Sargon's absence in the East to combine against him, in alliance with Sebech of Egypt. Sargon defeated Sebech at Raphia, conquered Gaza, and laid siege to Samaria (Annals, Hall II., tablets 3 and 6; Khorsabad Insc., 8; 2 Kgs. XVII., 4, 5; XVIII., 9, etc.).

The sixth year of Hezekiah, according to the account in Kings, was that of the final capture of Samaria. During this year and the year preceding, Sargon says that he was employed in the far North and East; but some of his accounts of his devastating the country of Hamath, Damascus, and Samaria, to the western sea (see, in particular, the Khorsabad Inscription, 8 Oppert, or the Cyprus Monolith, or K. 1349, where the details are essentially different from those of the campaign in which Sebech was defeated), and replacing their inhabitants with others, doubtless belonging to this date. At several different later dates, he mentions his settling of these countries with people from the regions of the Euphrates.

During the following four years, Sargon's exploits are mostly in Armenia and Mesopotamia. In his seventh year, however, the ninth of Hezekiah, he received tribute from Egypt, Arabia and the Sabeen king. In his 11th year, the 13th year of Hezekiah, he made his famous expedition to Ashdod, quelling a disposition to revolt, which had broken out there, but which was prevalent throughout Syria. This is commonly identified with the expedition mentioned in Isa. XX.

The next year, the 12th of Sargon and the 14th of Hezekiah, found Sargon engaged in the greatest military struggle of his life, that for the overthrowing of Merodach-Baladan in Babylon. Sargon mentions it as a particularly heinous of-

fense on the part of his Babylonian rival, that the latter was in the habit of sending ambassadors to persuade the nations to combine against Assyria.¹ In this very year, the year of Hezekiah's sickness, his ambassadors came to Jerusalem (2 Kgs. xx., 6; Isa. xxxviii., 5; 2 Kgs. xx., 12-19; Isa. xxxix.; 2 Chron. xxxii., 24, 31, etc.). Earlier in the same year, apparently, Sennacherib the son of Sargon, whom the biblical accounts here call the king of Assyria, had come up into Judah, captured many cities, and compelled Hezekiah to pay heavily for his previous refusal of tribute (2 Kgs. xviii., 13-16; Isa. xxxvi., 1). If this be the true understanding of the account, we may infer that, when Sargon went to the great campaign in Babylonia, Sennacherib took charge of the military operations in Palestine; and may also infer that the biblical account here calls him king by anticipation. If these were the circumstances, they afford a reasonable explanation of the fact that the king of Assyria was willing to let Hezekiah off with so moderate a penalty, instead of attempting utterly to overthrow him; although Hezekiah now seemed to be at his mercy, and had been so great a rebel, and was still willing to treat with Merodach-Baladan.

Since this first invasion of Sennacherib took place in the 14th year of Hezekiah, and the sickness of Hezekiah was in the same year, most readers of Isaiah and of Kings have understood them as saying that the events related between these, including the signal overthrow of the Assyrian king, occurred during the intervening time, in the same year. A little study of the matter, however, shows that the biblical account cannot mean this. "That night," 2 Kgs. xix., 35, might, of course, mean the night after the prophecy in question was given; but it may equally well mean "that night," at whatever date it came, in which God executed the judgments he had denounced. In this latter sense the phrase "that day" is familiarly used by the prophets, all along through this period. That the historian did not mean by it the night after the prophecy was given is evident from the context; for the deliverance which he describes is not one which is to come suddenly, but one which will leave Judah under the power of the oppressor, so that agriculture will be impossible for the remainder of that year, and for the following year (2 Kgs. xix. 29; Isa. xxxvii., 30). It is evident, therefore, that, in the Bible account, the first invasion of Sennacherib and the sickness of Hezekiah belong to the 14th year of the king, while the intervening events are not dated, but belong to a later period. It is probable that, in the 14th year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib, having received the submission and the stipulated tribute of that king, kept his agreement and departed, leaving Judah to several years more of peace and prosperity.

At the close of this year, Sargon claims to have dethroned Merodach-Baladan, and become king of Babylon as well as of Assyria; but the succeeding year Merodach-Baladan was still in arms, and had to be defeated again. After this defeat, Sargon says, "And no one saw him again." This may have been true, but it did not remain true for many years. The 19th year of Hezekiah was the 17th and last of Sargon. It was also the accession year—the year before the first year—of his successor, Sennacherib. The latter says that, "in the beginning of his reign," he defeated Merodach-Baladan, and captured his royal treasures in Babylon (Bellino Cylinder, lines 6-10). We may rest assured that the news of the death of Sargon, and of the fresh revolt of Merodach-Baladan had no tendency to make Hezekiah

¹ See, e. g., Khorsabad Insc., 38 Oppert.

quiet under the Assyrian yoke. In Sennacherib's third campaign, which several circumstances combine to date in his fourth year, the 23d year of Hezekiah, he marched into Syria.¹ Under the influence of Hezekiah, the people of Ekron had thrown off the yoke. Sennacherib says that he took tribute from a long list of kings and of countries, in Syria, Phœnicia, east of the Jordan, and in Philistia (apparently including Menahem or Samaria, and some other northern powers, which had, some time previously, been blotted out of existence); that he defeated at Eltekon (within the territory of Judah) the kings of Ethiopia and of Egypt, who came to the assistance of Ekron; that he took Ekron, and punished the rebels; that he captured 46 strongholds in Judah, carried off 200,000 of the people of Judah, and an immense spoil, prepared to besiege Hezekiah in Jerusalem, and received from him a large tribute. It is noteworthy that he neither claims to have captured Jerusalem, nor gives any reason for his neglecting to complete the subjugation of a rebel so particularly obnoxious as was Hezekiah. He concludes his account of the campaign by saying that Hezekiah sent his tribute and his tokens of submission, including his daughters, "unto Nineveh my royal city after me." The following year, Sennacherib tells us that he was hard at work in Babylonia, annihilating Merodach-Baladan once more, and defeating Suzub the Chaldean.

Some things in this bragging account are open to suspicion. But it agrees in the main with the account in Isaiah, and in the parallel verses in Kings and Chronicles. The promise of deliverance is in the following language:

"Behold I am giving, in his case, a wind; and he shall hear a rumor and shall return unto his land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his land." "Therefore I will put my hook into thy nostril, and my bridle within thy lips, and cause thee to return in the way in which thou camest. Now this shall be the sign to thee,"—that is to Hezekiah,—“to eat this year self-sown products, and in the second year spontaneous products, and in the third year sow ye and harvest, and plant vineyards and eat their fruit” (Isa. XXXVII., 7, 29, 30; 2 Kgs. XIX., 7, 28, 29).

The promise that he should hear a rumor which should divert him from his plans against Jerusalem, is commonly understood to have been met when he heard of the coming of the Ethiopian king to attack him, 2 Kgs. XIX., 9, etc. Sennacherib says that it was the kings of Egypt and Ethiopia (Taylor Cylinder, II., 73, 74), and is confirmed in this by 2 Kgs. XVIII., 21, etc. Many readers of the Bible have formed the impression that Sennacherib's great disaster befell him

¹ The easily accessible accounts of the reign of Sennacherib include the following:

1. The Bellino Cylinder, in the British Museum. Layard, vol. I., plate 63. Translated by H. F. Talbot, in *Rec. of Past*, vol. I. Dated the third year of Sennacherib.
2. Cylinder C, described and translated in part in Smith's *Assyr. Disc.*, chap. xvi. Dated the eighth year of Sennacherib.
3. The Taylor Cylinder, in British Museum. Rawlinson, plates 37 to 42. Dated the 14th year of Sennacherib. Translated by Talbot, in *Rec. of Past*, vol. I.
4. Bull Inscription from Koyunjik, in British Museum. W. A. I., p. 12. The first of the four slabs which compose it is translated by J. M. Rodwell, in *Rec. of Past*, vol. VII.
5. The Bavian Inscription. Three tablets engraved upon a rock at Bavian, north-east of Mosul. W. A. I., vol. III., plate 14, translated by T. C. Pinches, in *Rec. of Past*, vol. IX.
6. The Nebbi Yunus Inscription. A slab in the Imperial Museum at Constantinople. W. A. I., vol. I., plates 43, 44. Translated by E. A. Budge in *Rec. of Past*, vol. XI.

Full extracts from Cylinder C., and short extracts from some of the others, are given in Smith's *Chronology*.

in connection with this attack, or before he met it; but the Bible accounts none of them say this. Sennacherib says, on the contrary, that he gained a magnificent victory over these enemies, and there is no evidence against the truth of this statement. But from his account of the matter, it appears to have been the case that, having been interrupted in his plans against Jerusalem, by the rumor concerning the Ethiopian king, he was prevented from resuming and completing them, by the additional rumors that reached him from Babylonia, and other parts of his kingdom, and was thus compelled to "return unto his land" without carrying out his designs. The three years next following, Sennacherib says that he was engaged in desperate but successful wars, by land and sea, against Merodach-Baladan and his Chaldean and Elamite allies. The next year, the year of Sennacherib's seventh campaign, the eighth year of his reign, and the 27th of the reign of Hezekiah, as he was advancing with a vast army upon Madakta, the royal city of Elam, he met with a reverse, his account of which is translated by Talbot as follows:

"In the month of December a terrible storm arrived, a vast cataract poured down, rains upon rains, and snow, caused the torrents to burst forth. Then I quitted the mountains. I turned round the front of my chariot and I took the road to Nineveh."—Taylor Cylinder, iv., 75-79.¹

I do not pretend to answer the question whether it was a night of this storm concerning which the Bible says:

"And it came to pass in that night that the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of Assyria 185,000; and they arose early in the morning, and behold all of them were dead corpses. And Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp, and went and returned, and dwelt in Nineveh."—2 Kgs. xix., 35, 36.

Whether or no four years elapsed before the execution of this part of the judgment denounced against Sennacherib, his violent death did not occur until 14 years after the death of Hezekiah. Doubtless the pressure of Sennacherib's operations in the East led to the withdrawing of troops from Palestine, after his own withdrawal, so that Judah was able to sow and reap in the third year, according to the promise.

God answered Hezekiah's prayer, and cared for him, using for this purpose not only the powers of nature, but the peoples of Syria and Babylonia and Persia. The trouble with Hezekiah was that he wanted to intrigue for himself with these peoples. He was not content to let the Lord take care of him; but wished to use the Lord's instruments in taking care of himself. He found, as men who make the experiment are apt to find, that he was not up to the handling of such tools, and could only do mischief with them.

We have no space for comment. The facts are worth more than comment on them would be. With an immense number of points of agreement between the biblical and the Assyrian records, there are a few apparent discrepancies between them, and possibly some discrepancies that are real. It is quite commonly held that the chronological differences in regard to Sennacherib are great, and show the Hebrew chronology to be untrustworthy. It seems to me, on the contrary, that the chronological concord is absolutely perfect, and that it has equal weight to prove the chronological correctness of both records; and that it therefore shows that the positive testimony of the Hebrew records, for the period between Shalmanezar II. and Assur Daan III., is of more weight than the silence of the Assyrian records for that period.

¹ Other inscriptions give the same account.

DECEMBER 6. THE SINFUL NATION, ISA. I., 1-18.

The Book of Isaiah is composed of two parts. The first part consists of the first 39 chapters, and is made up of three groups of short discourses, followed by a historical sketch of the deliverance from Sennacherib, the latter being simply another copy of the account given in 2 Kings. The first verse of the book is the title, either of the first 39 chapters, or of the whole book. The remainder of the chapter is the first prophetic discourse of the book. It is in the form of a public address, perhaps a condensation of a longer address, impassioned, full of imagery, highly poetical in form, rather than itself a poem.

We naturally expect this first discourse to be either the earliest discourse in the book, or else an introduction, and therefore nearly the latest written part of it. Perhaps we can determine this question from the state of things described in it, which is likely to have been that which existed when it was written. It is a state of things in which the whole country is stricken throughout, verses 5, 6; devastated by foreign invaders, verse 7; until the daughter of Sion is reduced to the condition of a watch-hut in a vineyard, verse 8; a condition of things in which is prevalent the idolatry of oaks and gardens, verses 21, 29, 30; along with oppression, bribery and corruption, verses 17, 23. It is characterized by murders, verses 21 and 15 b; but also by the outward maintenance of the worship of Jehovah, verses 11 to 15 a. These marks fit the reign of Manasseh, and indicate that the book of the discourses of Isaiah was put together at that date, and this introductory discourse then written.

We do not need, however, to know the situation accurately, as preliminary to a profitable use of the chapter itself. Its great value consists in the moral and spiritual principles it enunciates; its doctrines of human sinfulness, of evils resulting therefrom, and of God's eagerness to pardon the repentant. These principles apply directly to our conduct, as they did to the conduct of Israel in Isaiah's time. We need not go a roundabout way through history, to get at them. We have a right to take them directly to ourselves.

THE STORY OF BALAAM RECONSIDERED.

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In a recent number of *THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT* there appeared an article, written by the late Dr. R. P. Stebbins, entitled "The Story of Balaam." An editorial note in the same issue suggests that the excellent reputation of the writer, together with his plan of viewing Scripture events in the light of their surroundings, were reasons sufficient to command attention for the article. To me, the simple fact that Dr. Stebbins was the writer was a sufficient reason for giving careful attention to the piece, and we must all deeply regret that the pen has at length fallen from the hand of so just and able a critic.

Notwithstanding all this, to one reader, at least, this revised story of Balaam is by no means satisfactory. Really its difficulties have been magnified, while at the same time its moral significance has been so destroyed that one fails to see any object in having it preserved in Sacred Writ. It may be well to form